

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #3176 3312153
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 272153Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1416
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6325
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3649
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7512
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4769
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2021
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2089
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4219
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4658
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9243
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 003176

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC CHURCH STEPS INTO THE POLITICAL FRAY

REF: A. LA PAZ 3155

[1](#)B. LA PAZ 3131

[1](#)C. LA PAZ 2017

[1](#)D. LA PAZ 2246

Classified By: Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4(b)

[1](#)1. (U) On November 26, the Catholic Church took steps to calm Bolivia's current political impasse; however it may have also opened itself up to renewed attacks by the ruling Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party. In response to the present political stalemate in which opposition party members are boycotting the Senate and where six of nine governors have "severed" relations with the central government (reftels A and B), Cardinal Julio Terrazas called on both sides to return to negotiations. In a statement read at weekend masses throughout Bolivia, the Cardinal called on the government "to administer without hate and intrigue, called for dialogue (between the GOB and opposition) and for the suspension of hunger strikes by certain members of the opposition." In the upper and middle class southern zone of La Paz, churches also began collecting signatures for a petition calling on the GOB not to prosecute ex-President Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze over the destruction of antiquated Chinese missiles. The GOB has not yet responded to Cardinal Terrazas' statement or the individual churches' actions.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment: In the past, GOB and MAS leaders have not been shy in criticizing the Church, at times saying it had sided with the "oligarchy" (reftel C). However, the Church remains a potent political force able to withstand MAS challenges. In certain cases, such as education reform, the Church has managed to get the GOB to give it guarantees. Despite statements by Rodriguez that he has no presidential ambitions, rumors are circulating that Morales views his predecessor as his only viable political opponent. Some MAS insiders have shared with poloff that Morales wants to see President Rodriguez prosecuted -- based on the MANPADS case (reftel D) -- and sentenced to eliminate the perceived threat. While the Cardinal's statement may be seen as an attempt to pacify the current political crisis, it indirectly expressed displeasure with the Morales government and risked instigating a new scuffle between the MAS and the Church.
End Comment.
GOLDBERG